

Clerk announces security system to thwart terrorists

Macomb County Clerk/Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh announced a document security system to make it harder for terrorists to use fraudulent documents. It may be the first of its kind in the nation. Record holders, employers and institutions with possession of a certified copy of a Macomb County birth record or other vital records may use the system, when its completed, to verify online whether the record is authentic. The system will only apply to Macomb County vital records, but Sabaugh hopes it will be adopted by other counties of the state.

"We found a way to use technology to prevent fraud and save money for taxpayers," Sabaugh said. "When this system is fully implemented, Macomb County records will be the most secure and reliable in Michigan. My hope is that this application could be applied statewide."

Sabaugh's document security system will enable persons needing to verify whether a Macomb County vital record is authentic by typing in the key information on the document, including the document's unique security paper identification number and issue date. The system protects privacy because information cannot be verified by anyone unless they actually have possession of a paper copy of the document. A test site is already functional and illustrates how the final system will work at www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice.

"This system will help in the fight against fraudulent documents," said Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, who has actively pursued those perpetrating identity thefts. "It helps verify whether a document is authentic."

Sabaugh announced a birth records protection system this summer in partnership with the

Social Security Administration that is estimated by the SSA to save \$257,000 over the first five years. The Immigration Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act, effective last December, requires the SSA to get third party verification of birth records. For example, when a person applies for a Social Security card they must present a birth certificate. Each birth certificate must now be individually verified as authentic by SSA staff, even if it is a certified copy. Using Sabaugh's new system, SSA staff may now verify birth records online instead of making a trip to the clerk's office. The new system means all Macomb County vital records can soon be verified, including birth, death, marriage and business records, instead of only birth certificates.

"Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh's program could be a model for the nation," said Social Security Administration District Manager William Seaman. "This is an example of national and local government working together to solve a problem and save money."

"This system will enable my staff to spend more time at the counter providing individual service to the public and less time verifying records," Sabaugh said. "If the system was applied to driver's licenses or other statewide documents, it could help restaurant owners make sure minors were not served alcohol and also help make sure employees' documents are in order."

Records issued in October will be covered by the system. Sabaugh plans to have vital record exchange days in the coming months. Anyone possessing a certified copy of a Macomb County birth certificate or other record issued prior to October will be able to exchange them for free for a certified copy on new security paper, after Sabaugh's staff confirms the record's authenticity and that

person presenting the record has the right to possess it. The system will be provided by Affiliated Computer Services Inc., as part of its vital records package.

This is not the first time Sabaugh has used technology to improve service. She recently posted on the Internet the names of candidates with campaign finance violations. She also

offers a 24-hour fax-on-demand service, accepts all court documents via fax filing, provides copies of public real estate records online and even lets jurors request library books

via the Internet. Other innovations are listed at <http://macombcountymi.gov/ClerkSOFFICE/AboutMacombCountyClerkClerkRegisterofDeedsCarmellaSabaugh.asp>.